

NIRANG-I-JASHAN-I-BURZIGARÂN.*

A RELIGIOUS FORMULA USED AS A CHARM ON THE DAY OF THE FESTIVAL OF THE CULTIVATORS (THE FIFTH DAY OF THE CURRENT PARSEE MONTH, SPENDÂRMAD, *i. e.*, 15TH AUGUST 1900).

Read on 29th August 1900.

President—LIEUT. COL. G. WATERS, I.M.S.

The fifth day of the current Parsee month, which is the twelfth and the last of the year, was known among the Persians as the Jashan-i-Burzigarân, *i. e.*, the festival of the agriculturists. This twelfth month bears the name of Spanta-Ârmaiti (Spendârmad), and the fifth day of every Parsee month also bears the name of Spendârmad. So the fifth day of this month bears the same name which the month bears.

Among the Parsees, each day of the month and each month of the year bear special names, and these names are the names of the Yazatas or Angels, who are believed to preside over the days or months. Spendârmad, who gives names to the current twelfth month and to the fifth day of each month, is one of the seven Amesha-Spentas or Archangels of the Avesta.

The word has been variously translated, but taking all the different meanings and comparing them with the Sanskrit Armati, the word can be understood to mean "obedience, devotion, wisdom." As Dr. Haug says, "She represents the pious and obedient heart of the true worshipper of Ahûra Mazda who serves God alone with body and soul."

Now, as, according to the Parsee books, each of the archangels and angels has, as it were, a field of activity both in the moral and in the material world, this angel Spenta-Ârmaiti

has the earth for its sphere of activity in the material world. She is a feminine angel, and is the protectress of the earth, which also, we know, is spoken of, by many nations, as the mother-earth. The earth is susceptible of being cultivated by those who ardently work for it, and yields to the efforts of men. So it is placed under the guardianship of Spenta-Armaiti, who, in the moral world, rules over 'obedience.'

Thus, then, the month, which bears the name of Spenta-Armaiti, and the fifth day of the month which bears the same name, are connected with earth. Hence, the propriety of celebrating that day as the festival of the agriculturists, whose sole business is that of tilling the earth. All men look to earth as the mother-earth, because they derive their sustenance from it. The agriculturists, who live upon it, are directly interested in it. In season, and out of season, they pray for its fertility and ask for God's blessings upon it.

Now, to keep the earth pure, is one of the most important dictates of the Avesta. Let it not be polluted by foul things. It is on that ground, that burial is prohibited in the Avesta. The earth, being polluted with the decomposing matter of dead bodies, is likely to contaminate surrounding substances. Whatever good that the earth produces, is the creation of the good principle, Spenta Mainyu. Whatever evil or noxious that it produces, is the creation of the evil principle, Angra Mainyu. Snakes, ants, worms, and such other insects are the production of Áhriman or Satan. So, they must be destroyed. They have their abode in the earth. So, the earth requires to be freed from these noxious creatures. It can be freed by practical means as well as by prayers. The above festival day was a special day for such prayers. As it is the cultivators who are the most interested in the question, that the ground should be free of worms, rats, snakes, and such other insects and reptiles that devoured their crops and rendered the cultivation difficult, the festival was mostly celebrated by them, as its name signified.

But these insects and reptiles were no less a nuisance to non-agriculturists living in towns. They were a source of harm and danger to them. So to townspeople also, the festival was of some importance.

We find from the traditions of many a nation, that physical evils and nuisances are sought to be removed by means other than practical means and regular prayers. Such means are what are called, mystical expedients.

“Faith in the virtue of charms, amulets and talismans is common to almost all nations and all ages. The belief has been prevalent at one time or another in almost all countries. Pieces of parchment, with passages from the Talmud, were carried about by the Jews on their bodies as amulets, and they were known as phylacteries. Pieces of paper, with passages from the Koran, are carried about by the Arabs under the name of Tâviz (amulets). One very often comes across such amulets among the Hindus.” In a paper,¹ read by me before this Society on the 28th of March 1894, with the above prefatory remarks, I had submitted a Parsee charm or amulet for the diseases of the eye. In this paper I give another Parsee charm or amulet for the extirpation of insects from a house. The charm given in this paper, is an instance of this kind presented by the Persian Revâyet, which are, in some of their parts, the “collections of memoranda regarding ceremonial observances.” I give this charm from the oldest copy of the Revâyet preserved in our University Library.

The intended object of the charm is the extirpation of the noxious insects that infest the earth, and are the cause of nuisance, and even danger, to the inmates of a house. In ancient Greece, by “the magic acts of the physician Apis, the brood of monstrous serpent forms, which, through the anger of the gods, had infested it, were driven out.”² In

¹ Charms or Amulets for some Diseases of the Eye.—Journal of the Bombay Anthropological Society. Vol. III, No. 6—pp. 338-45. *Vide* above pp. 43-50.

² Religion in Greek Literature, by Dr. Campbell, p. 205.

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Translation.

"By the name of the Creator, the Omniscient Lord, on the day Spendârmad of the month Spendârmad, I close the mouths of all noxious creatures, the demons, the demonesses, the sorcerers, the sorceresses, the tyrants, the mentally blind, the mentally deaf, the sinners, the robbers, the wolf-like, the oppressors. By the Glory of God, by the Glory of brave Faridun, by the Glory of the star Tishtar (Sirius), by the Glory of the star Satovis, by the Glory of the star Vanand, by the Glory of the star Haftorang (I close the mouths of, &c.)."

It must be specially noted, that the charm, besides wishing to extirpate the noxious creatures that infest the ground, wishes for the destruction of all evil-minded persons. In almost all the Nirangs, charms or amulets, the spiritual idea is never lost sight of. The mental and moral evils are always thought of, as the most important to be got rid of. The physical evils are sought to be rid of, so that the inmates of the house or the town may be better able to extirpate moral evils. Tishtrya, who was presiding over Sirius, the most brilliant of stars, was also the angel presiding over rain. The position of Sirius in the heavens, had a good deal to do with the rainy season in ancient Irân. So, with the other stars named in the charm, its appearance in the heavens had a connection with the rains. So, the names of these stars are also invoked for the fertility of the ground (Spendârmad), and for the extirpation of physical and mental evils.

¹ Others copies have *sham*, i.e., name.

² Other give *sham*

تاسر سده ای سده. در هر روز دس. و در روز دس. سده ای سده.
 ا سده دس. و در روز دس. و در روز دس. سده ای سده.
 سده دس. در هر روز دس. و در روز دس. یک سده دس.
 تاسر خواندن و سنگریزه به جای در خانه و گوشه کچه و بالا خانه و نه
 خانه انداختن تا خرفستان کمتر شوند

Translation of the special formula for consecrating the sand.

“In the month Aspendârmad and on the day Aspendârmad, on the day Aspendârmad of the month Aspendârmad, in month Aspendârmad, on day Aspendârmad, I shut up the poison and the venom of the mouths of all noxious creatures by the name and strength of brave Faridun, by the help of the star Vanand which is created by God. May it (*i. e.*, the influence of this) spread and prevail. May purity be its remedy. I strike, I strike well (these noxious creatures) for the removal of sins, for righteousness, for pleasing my soul.”

We find from the above formulæ, that not only were the noxious creatures infesting the ground sought to be extirpated, but evil-disposed persons, sorcerers, &c., were also sought to be removed.

We are told that similar things are even now sought to be done in some of the villages of England.

“In the parish of Kingstone, about seven miles from Hereford, in another direction, it was a custom, a very few years ago, to nail up two bits of wood—oak, we believe—in the form of the Greek cross over each of the house-doors of the room of alms-houses in that parish. When asked about this, the people said they did it with the object of scaring away witches and evil spirits. . . . Similar crosses are still to be seen over some of the houses and stable doors in Kingstone.”

Again we read: “On the eve of Monday, the farm labourers of several villages in that country (British Isles) are in the

habit of erecting a high pole in their master's farmyard. They are said to hold, that at that time, witches and such folk are especially evil disposed towards his live-stock. This pole is invariably a young birch tree. Not far from the top and thus forming a cross is placed a branch of what the country people thereabouts call the Wittern tree, a species of elder. The birch pole is decorated with streamers of red-coloured rags or handkerchiefs."¹

It is very rare to find now-a-days the above Nirang on the house of a Parsee in Bombay, but it is not so rare in Nowsaree, Surat, and other towns of Gujarat.

¹ Symbolism of the East and West, by Mrs. Murray Aynsley, p. 124.